



Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am Rita Blouke vice-president of the Helena Area League of Women Voters, here today on behalf of the LWV of Montana, to speak in opposition to SB 97. The League is a non-partisan organization that studies issues, reaches member consensus, and then takes positions based on those areas of agreement. The League of Women Voters US and the League of Women Voters of Montana has studied and taken positions on the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices since 1972.

On first glance this bill seems reasonable. By dropping the age from 18 to 16, it would seem to affect only immature minors. And we all want families to be healthy, cohesive, supportive units. By repealing the Reports section (50-20-211), it would seem to lessen the privacy issue. But upon thoughtful examination some concerns emerge:

- We believe the question of the age at which a minor is mature enough to make an informed decision about abortion is subjective and should not be legislated.
- Sadly, not all teenagers are fortunate enough to have supportive parents and families. Parental notification may make girls vulnerable to physical and emotional abuse.
- This judicial bypass section is problematic. It seems complex and fraught with opportunities for privacy to be breached regardless of the admonitions included. If a minor is mature enough to work her way through Section 8, it would seem she could garner the information that would allow her to make an informed decision about reproductive choice.
- And most concerning of all, this bill seems to serve as a means of eroding the legality of abortion as established by *Roe vs. Wade*.

The League of Women Voters continues to believe decisions about reproductive choice must be left to women and their doctors. Our position states, "*The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.*" *Impact on Issues 2006-2008, League of Women Voters of the United States, page 23*. Because we believe this proposal weakens the right to privacy and because we believe it is still unconstitutional, we oppose this bill.

Rita Blouke,

Legislative Steering Committee

League of Women Voters of Montana